

# NEW FRONTIERS

• PERIODICAL STUDIES IN ECONOMICS AND POLITICS •

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## **Industrial Unionism in the American Labor Movement**

**By**

**THERESA WOLFSON Ph.D.**

**and**

**ABRAHAM WEISS**

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VOLUME 5 NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY, 1937

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112 East 19th Street

New York City, N. Y.

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LEAGUE FOR INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

# NEW FRONTIERS

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VOL. V • NO. 2

FEBRUARY 1937

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY FROM SEPTEMBER TO JUNE BY THE  
LEAGUE FOR INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY, 112 EAST 19th ST., NEW YORK CITY

## *INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM IN THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT*

*By* THERESA WOLFSON, PH.D.

*and*

ABRAHAM WEISS

25 CENTS PER COPY • SUBSCRIPTION \$2.50 PER YEAR

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Entered as second class matter, June 9, 1933, at the Post Office of New York, N. Y.  
under the act of March 3, 1933

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# INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM IN THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT



## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

**T**HE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT is now engaged as never before in its history, in the struggle for the organization of the basic industries of the country, yet since the formation of the American Federation of Labor some fifty years ago it has never been so torn in fratricidal warfare as it is at present. Ideologies, personalities, philosophies, and membership have been thrown into a seething cauldron of disagreement, and what the brew will be is difficult to prophesy. It is safe to make one prophecy—that unless there is a vigorous, well organized and united labor movement in the United States, it will be difficult for the organized and the unorganized worker to maintain the economic and political rights he has at present. The old adage of “Divide and Conquer” still functions in economic and political life.

The basis of this conflict within the American labor movement is the disagreement as to the structure of union organization which should prevail in mass production industries. A clear definition of terms is essential to an understanding of this conflict between the adherents of craft unionism and those of industrial unions. *The basis of the craft union is the organization of workers according to the tools used. The basis of the industrial union is the organization of workers according to the product created by an industry.* William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, once defined industrial unionism as “an organization of all men employed in an industry into one compact union. Craft unionism means the organization of men employed in their respective crafts, resulting in numerous organizations within a particular industry.”<sup>1</sup> “The United Mine Workers of America is an industrial organization. All men employed in and around the coal mines, regardless of their skill or calling, belong to the United Mine Workers of America. In negotiating a wage scale between the coal operators and coal miners, a schedule of wages is arranged governing all classes of labor, skilled and unskilled, employed in and around the coal mines. By this process the interest of

the unskilled worker is given as much attention as that of the skilled worker. It is indeed, in the fullest sense, a policy of all for each and each for all. A settlement of the wage scale is not finally reached until the schedules applying to all classes of labor employed in and around the mines are agreed to."'

It is difficult to cite an example of a pure and simple craft union although, offhand, one may designate the Locomotive Engineers or the Telegraphers' Union.

The movement for industrial unionism in the American labor movement is not a new tendency. In reality it preceded the formation of the American Federation of Labor. What is new and significant in the present struggle within the American labor movement is the rapid transformation in methods and techniques of production and distribution, the stratification of labor, the failure of the old trade unions to meet adequately these changes in industry, and the appearance of personalities within the labor movement powerful enough to assume the leadership of dissident groups. Industrial unionism as it is sponsored by the Committee for Industrial Organization, the most recent exponent, is not radical. Previous exponents of industrial unionism like the Knights of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World held revolutionary ideas, even if somewhat confused, concerning the role of the trade union in the abolition of the capitalist system and the emancipation of the wage-earning class. The fundamental objectives of the leaders of the C. I. O. today are similar to those of the leaders of the international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The difference lies in the structure of the unions they hope to organize and the intensity and energy which they are willing to exert in organizing. This difference stems from a shrewd appreciation of the changing structure of industry dominated by monopoly capitalism. Many adherents of craft unionism may also understand these changes in industry indicated by increasing mechanization, the breakdown of skills, and the rise of giant corporations, but they have a sincere faith in the craft union as a hitherto stable and effective instrument for securing better wages and working conditions for workers, and fail to see the "handwriting on the wall."

The crisis of 1929 and the years of increasing unemployment among skilled and unskilled workers was accompanied by desperate demoralization and loss of membership within the existing trade unions. The

passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act with its section 7A gave an impetus to trade union organization which was only temporary. The years of depression were followed by the recovery trends of 1935 and 1936. The startling features of this recovery period were that workers continued to be unemployed, or where they were re-employed, their status had radically changed. Increasing mechanization resulted in increased productivity and profits, but little improvement in the economic status of workers. The craft unions were unable to hold the gains in membership of 1934 and 1935. In fact the very skills upon which the craft unions were dependent had been "shot to pieces" by new processes. The basic industries in which recovery first appeared were rubber, steel, radio, and automobile. These industries constitute the battle field of the present struggle within the American labor movement. The adherents of craft unionism bitterly maintain that workers in these industries can be organized by the existing craft unions. The leaders of industrial unions believe that so centralized and powerful is the control of these mass production industries, that only the formation of industrial unions including all the workers within an industry regardless of craft or skill can effectively secure and maintain the rights of labor. The battle which is now raging is complicated by the vested interests of established unions and personalities, by the notion that industrial unionism means Socialism or Communism, and by the tremendous organized opposition of the giant corporations involved in the picture who want no unionism at all within their industries.

## CHAPTER II. THE ERA OF CRAFT UNIONISM

**I**N ORDER to understand the fetish which contemporary labor leaders have made of craft organization it may be wise to survey briefly the history of trade unionism in this country. Generally speaking, the organization of workers reflected the changes in productive techniques and the expansion of markets. In the stage of our handicraft economy, benevolent societies of journeymen workers were formed, and cooperated with master workmen in securing adequate prices for custom made goods. The introduction of the merchant-capitalist, the entrepreneur who had special aptitude in "sizing up a

market, driving a bargain, and commanding credit,"<sup>1</sup> forced the journeyman to abandon their affiliations with the master workman. They then combined in independent craft organizations to secure better wages, and working conditions within a local area. The panic of 1837 and the subsequent depression were responsible for the wholesale collapse of these craft unions. Because the prospects of immediate economic improvement were dimmed during the "teeming forties," Utopian projects and land settlement schemes distracted labor's attention from unionism. The industrial revival following the discovery of gold in California in 1849 stimulated the rise of local craft unions among skilled artisans. Many of them merged into regional federations and in the case of the molders and locomotive engineers, even national organizations were established.

The Panic of 1857, the early years of the Civil War and the practice of importing immigrant labor under contract made temporary inroads on unionism. Another factor responsible for this trend was the Homestead Act granting free lands to settlers, which removed a potential, if not actual, labor supply by attracting immigrants, marginal farmers and some artisans to the "frontier."<sup>2</sup> The spur given to manufacturing during and after the Civil War and the rise of employers' associations resulted in the formation of *mixed trade assemblies*. These were local federations of craft unions in different industries, for the purpose of stabilizing competitive conditions among laborers within a city. The National Labor Union, organized in 1866, was an attempt to federate some of the national craft unions and trade assemblies in order to launch a campaign for political reform. It has been described as a "typical American politico-reform organization, led by labor leaders without organizations, politicians without parties, women without husbands, and cranks, visionaries, and agitators without jobs."<sup>3</sup> No permanent agreement, however, could ever be reached as to the kinds of political measures which would best serve labor. The panic of 1873 not only witnessed the collapse of the National Labor Unions, but also of many of the craft unions.

The *Knights of Labor* was the outgrowth of a secret union of garment cutters in Philadelphia which soon opened its doors to other workers. In 1878 with the start of recovery it abandoned its secrecy tactics and stated its philosophy. It proclaimed a concern for all workers regardless of skill, sex, or race. Its slogan was: "An injury

to one is the concern of all." It caustically criticized craft exclusiveness and declared that the differences between skilled and unskilled laborers could be bridged by the solidarity of all labor. Only when all separate craft interests were subordinated to the welfare of the whole, asserted Uriah Stephens, the founder of the Order, "could we secure the physical well-being, the mental development and the moral elevation of mankind." Anyone "working for wages, or who at any time worked for wages," could become a member. Only saloon keepers, lawyers, doctors and bankers, were prohibited from joining the Knights of Labor. A regulation stipulated, however, that three-fourths of the membership of new locals must be wage earners. The structure of the Knights of Labor was highly centralized. The general assembly was vested with full and final jurisdiction in all matters pertaining to local and mixed assemblies. Local assemblies were composed of workers of one trade. Mixed assemblies had no specific trade requirement. This dual form of organization coupled with a lack of local autonomy was the source of much friction and confusion. The emphasis of the Knights of Labor was on political action and cooperation rather than upon strikes, boycotts, and the usual techniques used by trade unions. The peak of its strength was reached in 1886 when it had a membership of some 700,000. This membership was drawn mainly from the unskilled and those deprived of their trade by rapid technical changes—groups of workers ignored by the existing craft unions. The failure of the Knights of Labor was due primarily to the fact that it was unable to merge skilled and unskilled workers into a unified organization.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century has been called the "era of the robber barons." This period of American economic life marked the beginning of large corporations, quasi-monopolies in natural resources, and greater financial integration. Nevertheless, the bulk of production was carried on in small scale business enterprises. The skilled worker was still at a premium. He had a pride in his skill and a vested interest in maintaining it. The craft unions refused to believe that "the interests of all workers were identical," and in 1881 formed the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions. Five years later the Federation became a permanent organization, the *American Federation of Labor*. For a decade the A. F. of L. was a dual organiza-

ton competing with the Knights, and by 1890 it completely supplanted it.

The craft union in the A. F. of L. became the protective agent of the skilled artisans. Its chief concern was to secure control of the small scale competitive industries and establish shop rules and regulations which would tend to stabilize conditions for its members. It stressed limitation of a skilled labor supply and a job monopoly through high dues and initiation fees in the interest of the skilled worker already in the union. Tangible demands such as the eight hour day, the restriction of immigration and higher wages, were in order rather than vague socialist and other political credos. "We have no ultimate ends," declared Adolph Strasser, one of the organizers of the American Federation of Labor along with Samuel Gompers. "We are fighting only for immediate objects—objects that can be realized in a few years."

Although Gompers often asserted that he believed ultimately in the abolition of the wage system, he never permitted such ideas to interfere with the more immediate problem of making "labor a contented and prosperous partner of business in this American system of acquisition and enjoyment." Under his vigorous direction the Federation eschewed partisan politics stressing "pure and simple" trade unionism.

In the course of its struggle to assume control over the labor movement the A. F. of L. developed a keen antagonism toward centralization and dualism which might threaten craft autonomy. The independence and autonomy of its national affiliates is the cardinal structural principle of the Federation. The national or international union controls all the local units in its craft. *Federal labor locals* are organized when there are not sufficient workers in each craft to warrant the formation of separate craft locals. These labor locals receive a charter directly from the A. F. of L. and are under its supervision. In addition, federal *trade* locals are craft organizations directly affiliated with the Federation because there is no national union to absorb them. Periodically throughout the history of the A. F. of L., raids have been made on these federal locals by existing craft internationals. The unions affiliated with the Federation are held together only by moral obligations but the device of the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. and the decisions of its annual Convention have been a remarkable method of control. The greatest power which the Federa-

tion wields has been in the matter of determining jurisdiction. The charter that is granted by the annual Convention gives the union rights and privileges. Whenever disputes between two or more unions over the right to control certain kinds of work or certain workers already enrolled in federal locals arise, the Federation through the Executive Council is the supreme arbiter in defining the spheres of authority. Consequent losses of membership have made the unions jealous of any encroachment even by A. F. of L. unions.

Between 1886 and 1901 the Federation was comparatively little concerned with possible jurisdictional disputes. The Executive Council, according to one commentator, "often recognized craft lines where differentiation in skill was hard to find and marked off minute subdivisions." Its policy of favoring craft independence proved to be expedient until the turn of the century. However, it gradually became complicated by jurisdictional disputes. This was partly because, in the period 1886-1901, it granted charters without foreseeing complications, since "the unions were so small and there were so many unorganized workers." After 1901, technological changes and the increasing transformations in skills multiplied jurisdictional disputes. This stimulated a movement in favor of a type of union organization which might more effectively meet the rapidly expanding industries—industrial unionism. The craft was no longer identical with the handicraft concept of division of labor but corresponded actually to a detailed routine process requiring little training and skill. Workers could shift readily from one task to another and those with little training could compete successfully with those of long years of apprenticeship. The result was that when one craft threatened to withdraw its members by striking, the employer could replace them more easily than formerly. Furthermore, as new industries developed and old industries either declined or enlarged their scope, there was a marked tendency toward integration. Instead of one firm purchasing semi-finished and finished products from another, it frequently found it more profitable to supply its own commodities either in subsidiary plants which it controlled or in its own plant. To this verticalization was added a tendency toward mergers or horizontal organization in industry. These tremendous aggregations of capital presented a powerful obstacle to the efforts of unions, especially if they relied only on the power to withdraw their craft skill. Moreover, with their mem-

bers often scattered in different places of employment throughout the country, the craft unions could not effectively unite them. The craft union organization encouraged jurisdictional disputes and enabled employers by the use of time contracts, to play one craft against another. This "scabbing on the job" was the object of many attacks by the "new unionism." In 1905, for example, Eugene V. Debs declared that to "organize along craft lines means to divide the working class and make it the prey of the capitalist class."

In 1899, James O'Connell, president of the Machinists' Union, pointed out the problems of jurisdictional disputes and introduced a resolution which sought to guarantee to each craft "absolute self-government and complete jurisdiction" over its members regardless of where they might be employed.<sup>10</sup> The Convention modified this resolution, and in the following year established the principle of *amalgamation* as the best agency to deal with jurisdictional disputes. This in reality was the first blow at the narrow conception of craft autonomy, for it permitted the fusion of similar crafts in different industries. At the Scranton Convention in 1901 the famous "Autonomy Resolution" was drafted to establish a basis of harmony between industrial and craft unionists. This declaration recognized the impossibility of drawing hard and fast lines between crafts, but urged that the principle of autonomy be maintained in force as is "consistent with the various phases and transitions in industry." From the point of view of the industrial unionists this resolution left much to be desired and they renewed their criticism of craft unionism. When the attacks on craft autonomy came from the avowed advocates of industrial unionism then craft unionism became a "matter of principle rather than of expediency and adjustment, and the Federation if it yielded at all did so only in the last extremity."<sup>11</sup> The craft unionists were determined not to yield any point, asserting that the industrial unionists were to blame for the internecine strife. Gompers scolded the latter in the following vein at the 1903 Convention:—"The attempt to force the trade unions into what has been termed industrial organization is perverse to the history of the labor movement, runs counter to the best conception of the toilers' interests now and is sure to lead to the confusion that precedes dissolution and disruption. It is time for the American Federation of Labor to solemnly call a halt."

But the A. F. of L. was not destined to call a halt and practical de-

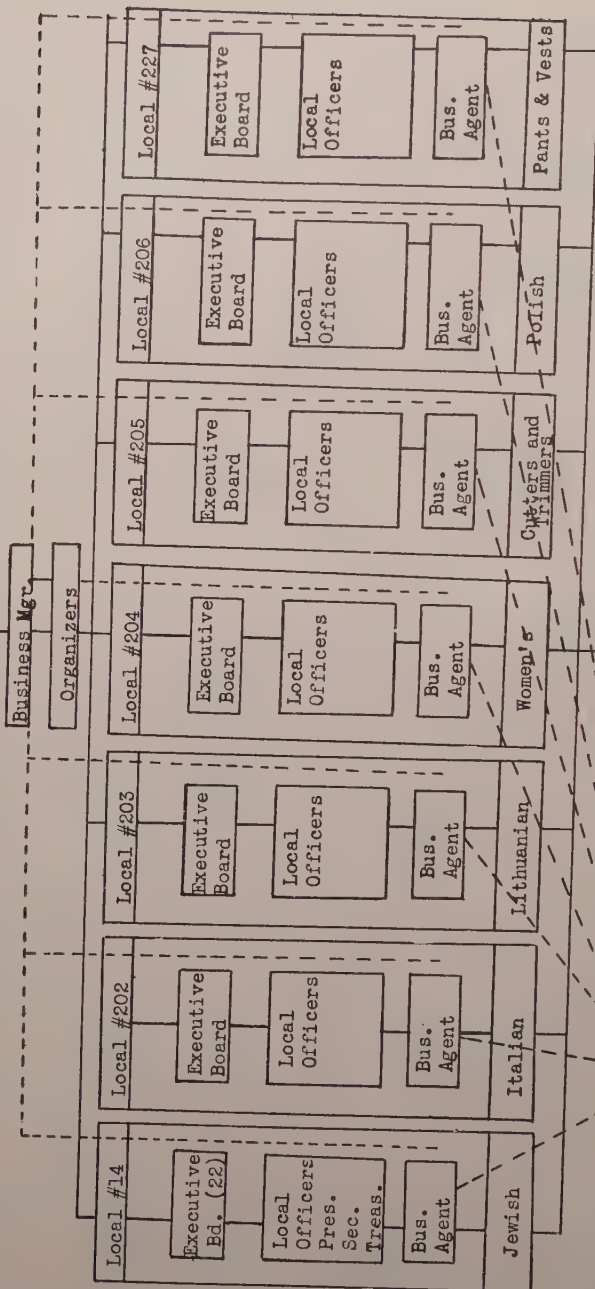
partures from craft unionism had to be introduced. Pressed by new immigrants and militant unionists, skilled workers in the needle trades, mining and textile industries began to make common cause with the semi-skilled and to reorganize their unions on a wider trade basis. By 1915 only 28 of some 133 national organizations could still be characterized as purely craft in structure. The general tendency was for a policy of craft industrialism which meant in substance that unions extended their jurisdictions to include unorganized workers in similar crafts or combined in a tight "amalgamation of related trades." "The formation of departments—"the industrial unionism of the upper stratum"—under the aegis of the Executive Council resulted in the expeditious settlement of many jurisdictional disputes by reconciling and coordinating the interests of all unions in a single industry. Gompers proudly exclaimed that these innovations "would prove conclusively that the critics of our movement who charge or insinuate that the labor movement does not progress offer a false and mischievous untruth."

The formation of the I. W. W. was bitterly denounced and Gompers sarcastically called its founders "world redeemers." When the I. W. W. took up the cudgels for industrial organization, the craft leaders, consciously or not, confused the issue by charging industrial unionism was synonymous with anarchism and syndicalism. In fact, Gompers went so far as to say that it was fundamentally incompatible with the Federation's structure and philosophy in the following answer to Rosenberg, Secretary of the Ladies' Garment Workers:—"Industrial unionism so-called (for no comprehensive definition has yet been found to describe its boundary lines or classify the elements contained therein) is a theory which if carried to its logical or better yet its illogical conclusions is going back to the primitive battle-field. The advocates of this form of organization, at least a great many of them, assume that the organizations of labor can be successfully continued and combined into one gigantic union. Were it possible to reach a condition of this character, the concentration of power necessary to carry out the objects desired, the democracy which now exists in our unions would give way to autocracy." Historically, therefore, the conflict between craft unionists and industrial unionists became a conflict of personalities as well as a deliberate distortion of terms.

The spectacular strikes which the I. W. W. conducted in Lawrence,

# STRUCTURAL PLAN FOR TYPICAL INDUSTRIAL UNION

Rochester Joint Board - A.C.W. of A. (42)		
Officers	Bd. of Directors	Finance Comm. Grievance Comm. Membership Comm.



\*Local #14  
No women members

Massachusetts, and Paterson, New Jersey, where textile unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor had played a negative role, precipitated anew the discussion of industrial unionism. At the 1912 Convention the Socialists with newly acquired political prestige and some control in the Machinists', Miners', and Journeyman Tailors' international unions demanded an unequivocal statement in favor of industrial unionism. The Executive Council at this Convention criticized the "mistaken interpretation" that the Scranton declaration prevented the extension of union membership to lower strata of labor or an amalgamation of unions to strengthen labor's fighting front." It repudiated the insinuation that the craft unions were rigid, unyielding, and unable to adapt themselves to new conditions. But the resolution for industrial unionism was defeated by a vote of 10,924 to 5,929 despite the energetic fight in favor of its adoption. The minority report of the committee on resolutions offered the substitute motion declaring that wherever practical one organization should have jurisdiction over an industry, but if the majority of the workers concerned were opposed to this there should be an organization of all crafts in the industry into a department. In the long debate which followed, Gompers declared that "to attempt to meet these new economic conditions without taking into account our existing organizations as they are now formed, to attempt to institute industrial organizations with the avowed purpose of destroying existing trade unions is not only foolhardy but in itself ruinous, aye, almost criminal." The compromise was defeated likewise and the American Federation of Labor continued its stubborn adherence to the philosophy of craft unionism. Thus it was that the craft unions "developed as an organized aristocracy of the upper layers of skilled labor, contemptuous of the unorganized and the unskilled." "

### CHAPTER III. PROGRESSIVE AND REVOLUTIONARY INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

IN 1913, a quarter of a century after its formation, the membership of the A. F. of L. was less than two million, or less than fifteen per cent of the working class in the United States. By 1930 the percentage of workers organized declined to 9.3 per cent of the total working population. In that year it was estimated that there were

some 7,977,572 semi-skilled and 14,008,869 unskilled workers as contrasted with the 6,282,687 skilled workers (including foremen).<sup>1</sup> It was natural, therefore, for the supporters of industrial unionism to attempt to organize the unorganized as a challenge to the A. F. of L. These supporters were divided into two groups, those within the A. F. of L., namely the needle trades unions, the United Mine Workers, the Brewery Workers Union, and the more revolutionary groups outside of the A. F. of L.

These exponents of industrialism have been collectively lumped together as the "new unionists" because they made their appeal to American labor on the grounds of proletarian solidarity, class struggle and the "new social order."<sup>2</sup> Despite this designation they differed sharply on such tactical questions as the use of trade agreements and the problem of the proper role of unionism in attaining the future collectivist society.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most controversial point at issue between the progressive and revolutionary industrial unionists was that of "boring from within" the A. F. of L. The former, best exemplified by the "new unionism" in the clothing and the coal mining unions, maintained that the Federation with all its faults and limitations was a bona fide labor organization, and that the cooperation of all real progressives would inevitably modify the traditional A. F. of L. opposition to industrial unionism.<sup>4</sup> Although their crusading ardor was somewhat dampened during the Harding "back to normalcy" era, they were nevertheless instrumental in effecting twenty-nine amalgamations and creating five departments within the A. F. of L.

The structural setup of these progressive unions maintained the craft nucleus but broadened its control so that it contained a number of skills within the industry. In fact, a structure was evolved which not only included differences in skills, but also language groups and geographical areas. This was particularly true of the clothing workers' unions both in the men's and women's garment industries.

A typical example of a semi-industrial union can be studied in the evolution of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. The local union consists as a rule of a single craft; cutters, pressers, or finishers. Sometimes it consists of workers in several crafts but of one nationality or sex. These local unions are organized for the purpose of expedient action so that whether they represent many workers of one craft, or workers in several crafts, depends upon the locality

of the industry. The local is the unit of representation in the general convention of the international union. A number of locals in a large city are organized into a Joint Board for the city, made up of delegates from local unions. It is this Joint Board which assumes responsibility for negotiations with employers concerning trade agreements. It supervises the work of grievance committees. It makes decisions concerning strikes, except in case of a general strike for the entire industry.

Special skills determine special wage standards—but general standards pertaining to working hours, conditions of work, division of work, etc., are laid down for the entire industry within a market or throughout the country. Thus both skilled and unskilled workers are organized within one union. This structural form was adopted by both adherents of the new unionism bloc, with variations to be sure, dependent upon the nature of the industry and the degree of geographic localization which exists. The A. F. of L. did not object to the structure of these unions because for the most part they developed as new unions in new industries.

To the organization of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union there was bitter objection, because it was considered a dual union to the United Garment Workers' Union. However, so successfully did the A. C. W. wage its organization drive in the men's clothing industry that the jurisdiction of the United Garment Workers was narrowed down primarily to the plants producing work-clothes and overalls—the rest of the men's clothing industry became the "play ground" for the A. C. W.

Radical industrialism pursued an entirely different course. After failing to "force an entering wedge for socialism" in the American trade union movement during the 1873-1878 depression, the newly-organized *Socialist Labor Party* began to turn to dualism.<sup>6</sup> This practice was frowned upon by Engels, the co-founder of scientific socialism, who urged the S. L. P. not to "pooh-pooh" the existing unions from without, but to "revolutionize them from within"<sup>7</sup> and by Sorge, Marx's immediate American disciple, who wrote in the "Neue Zeit" that "a modus vivendi (between socialists and unionists) must be found to enable a working side by side in a peaceable way."<sup>8</sup> For some time the S. L. P. accepted this line and its prestige and influence in the Federation and Knights began to mount. But the re-

fusal of the A. F. of L. in 1894 to accept the socialist ideals and the repeated failures to capture the Knights, convinced the S. L. P., or more specifically, its vitriolic leader, Daniel DeLeon, that a new approach was in the order of the day. "

Asserting that the Federation was "hopelessly ruined and beyond salvation" " and that the Knights of Labor was "in the swamp of consciousnessless corruption" " and "had been reduced to a nest of crooks," " DeLeon in 1895 prevailed on the S. L. P. to form the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance. Ostensibly a center for "boring from within," " the Alliance soon changed into an apparatus parallel to the A. F. of L. Scabbing on the Federation and strike-breaking became approved techniques in carrying out the slogan:—"Wreck the old trade unions." " To justify these tactics DeLeon promulgated the first crystallized conception of revolutionary industrialism. Unless the trade union was "enlisted in the class struggle of the proletariat," it was a "buttress of the boss class" and "injured the workers." " Leaders of craft and reformist unions were merely the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class"—that is, they were bribed by the bourgeoisie to "enslave and slowly degrade" the proletariat. " The genuine union had the "supreme mission" of organizing the workers on an industrial basis not for the purpose of gaining meaningless reforms but to facilitate the conquest of power and the "socialist reconstruction of society." " These grandiose theories and disruptive measures never attracted more than 35,000 workers": largely in the needle trades and shoe industries. Despite all DeLeon's herculean efforts, the Alliance was necessarily "still-born." " By 1903 the process of disintegration was so marked that Hillquit could write that while the S. T. & L. A. "still exists in name, it plays no part in the trade union movement of the country." "

In contradistinction to the doctrinaire dualism of De Leon, was the "pragmatic dualism" in the West, fostered by geographical isolation and fierce class war struggles. " The Western Federation of Miners, formed in 1895, included pick and shovel workers, millmen, smeltermen, and engineers. Originally affiliated with the A. F. of L., it severed its connection after the Leadville strike in 1896 because the craft unions furnished no financial or moral support. It then became the effective agency in the establishment of the Western Labor Union in 1898. Like the S. T. & L. A. the *Western* (later known as the

*American) Labor Union* was industrial more in theory than in fact. Industrial unionism and concerted political action "of all workers" were endorsed as "the only method" of attaining socialism.<sup>21</sup> It figured in the most strenuous and dramatic strikes in American history but, unable to consolidate its position and suffering several decisive checks, it soon was "on the verge of disruption—practically dead."<sup>22</sup>

By 1905, the frustrated Eastern socialists and Western militants had become convinced that a national industrial organization, if given radical direction and impetus, would easily supersede the outmoded craft Federation. The *Industrial Workers of the World* adopted a program which was merely an amplification of the American Labor Union's position. But it immediately became a battle ground for the political philosophies of Marxism, anarchism, craftism, "pure and simple" industrialism, DeLeonism and syndicalism—with the latter emerging victorious in 1908.<sup>23</sup> The roots of the I. W. W. extended most vigorously in the West, particularly among the unskilled and migratory native Americans. After 1910 the I. W. W. invaded Eastern textile districts and led a few important strikes. In so doing, however, it earned the undying hatred of the craft unions and both groups resorted to scabbing and strikebreaking. According to Walter Weyl, a newspaper critic of that period, "Between the A. F. of L. and the I. W. W. there is an antagonism more irreconcilable than between mill owners and textile workers."<sup>24</sup> For all of its militancy and devotion to the cause of the working class the I. W. W. at its highest point never had more than 60,000 members.<sup>25</sup> The disintegration of the I. W. W. was caused by repeated factional secessions and splits, by the shifting character of its membership, and by the inability of the organization to combine effectively the struggle for immediate demands with its syndicalist orientation, by its scorn for political activity and reforms and practices which make for stable mass organizations and by the vicious attacks of organized labor and capital as well as the severe anti-war persecutions.<sup>26</sup>

In 1919 the American Communists, taking their cue from the thesis that the class struggle in the United States was "entering the phase of civil war,"<sup>27</sup> determined to break the A. F. of L. Disavowing reforms as sop and palliatives which on the eve of social revolution only retarded proletarian activity, they called for armed insurrection and a

Soviet America. Lenin, however, scored these "infantile left" tactics and advised that "on no account must Communists leave the reactionary federations of labor."<sup>28</sup> In accordance with this dictum the *Trade Union Educational League* was formed in 1920 and soon affiliated with the Profintern. It was to act as the revolutionary opposition in reformist unions and as a center for the dissemination of Communist propaganda. While agitating "for the ideas of revolutionary class struggle, social revolution and proletarian dictatorship," the T. U. E. L. also led the fight for industrial unionism and gained control of several locals in the needle trades and the New York City fur unions."

"Boring from within," however, was on the whole unprofitable and often caused the expulsion of active Communists. In 1928, after being criticized for "dancing quadrilles around the A. F. of L.," the C. P. resolved to abandon "the fetish of unity with the old unions" and to proceed "promptly, resolutely, and aggressively to the formation of new (dual) unions."<sup>29</sup> The following year saw the establishment of the Trade Union Unity League whose purpose it was to build revolutionary industrial unions "separate from and fighting against the A. F. of L. organizationally and politically."<sup>30</sup>

The A. F. of L. leaders and unions were dubbed "fascists," "strike-breakers," "agents of American imperialism," and "jingo militarists."<sup>31</sup> Here was the line laid down by the Comintern: The C. P.'s duty was "to break up the reformist trade unions, to explode their discipline and to destroy their apparatus."<sup>32</sup> Communists were exhorted to "capture" existing unions, or failing that, to split them and bolster up the rival T. U. U. L. organization. Such tactics alienated the rank and file support and facilitated their own expulsion. Expelled Communists would then resort to forming paper "industrial unions" and to demanding a "united front from below" against the labor "bureaucrats." The administration of these unions was an example of sectarianism run wild. Their officials were appointed from 'above,' and were subjected to the C. P. line. Even more dangerous than this abrogation of trade union democracy was the T. U. U. L.'s strike strategy. To offer the bosses cheaper terms of settlement than the rival A. F. of L. union so as to be 'recognized' or to call strikes without preparations and then make 'strategic retreats'—these were manifestations of a suicidal trade union policy. Isolated from the main stream of the American labor movement and unable to gain a

foothold in existing unions, the T. U. U. L. was finally liquidated in 1935.

These revolutionary industrial unions were formed by radical enthusiasts, gained momentary success but ultimately sank into the morass of sterility and organizational isolation. Their chief energies were centered on making converts to the political cause rather than on building up a powerful economic organization. The practice of discrediting and disrupting craft unions had a reverse effect, for they themselves only became "metamorphosed into a sect of the faithful." "Dualism gave the craft leaders a golden opportunity to secure full control over their unions by removing any opposition and to convince many sincere workers that disruption and industrial organization were inseparable. The bitter warfare accompanying the formation of these dual unions was enhanced by a network of political theories and sectarian formulae, leaving the cardinal principle of industrial organization as such, lost in the fog of calumny and invective.

#### CHAPTER IV. ORGANIZING THE UNORGANIZED

##### *Failure to Organize Steel*

URING the War and Post-war period there was a definite increase in trade union membership within the A. F. of L. This resulted from the favorable policy of the government toward collective bargaining and a tightened labor market.<sup>1</sup> In 1914 the total membership of the A. F. of L. was 2,716,900. By 1920 this had jumped to 4,078,740. Throughout this period the progressive elements within the A. F. of L. urged organization in the mass production industries. Finally at the 1918 convention of the A. F. of L. a resolution was introduced urging a drive to organize the steel industry.

The Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers which had nominal jurisdiction over these workers was theoretically industrial in structure. Its charter provided for "the organization of workers in and around rolling mills, tin mills, steel works and chain works." In practice, however, it was content, as one critic put it, "to hold on to a steadily diminished group in the steel mills and furnaces."<sup>2</sup> Automatic steel mill rolling had displaced most of the skilled artisans and in an age of steel, wrought iron became obsolete.<sup>3</sup> The

dependence, therefore, of this union upon its narrow craft base was dangerous in the face of the tremendous technological changes which were taking place. "The logic of the industry's operations is such," according to a report based on an investigation conducted by the Bureau of Business Research, University of Pittsburgh, "that vertical (i. e., industrial) rather than craft organization is called for. Integrated operations extending from blast furnace to the finished rolled-steel product constitute the economic unit, and a form of organization (such as craft unionism) that would encourage jurisdictional disputes would be socially inefficient. Since management is organized on a vertical basis, any approach to equality of bargaining power would require a similar vertical organization of the workers."<sup>4</sup>

In 1886 the steel union had been one of the strongest in the country. Its hold on the industry was broken in the historic Homestead Strike of 1892. Thereafter its chief activity consisted, according to a statement of its president, Michael Tighe, "in giving way to every request made by the steel men when they insisted upon it."<sup>5</sup> But even this compliant attitude did not save it from the attacks of the steel magnates and in 1909 it ceased functioning.

In 1918 and 1919 when the government, in an effort to stimulate production in key industries, was ready to admit labor's right to organize and bargain collectively, an unprecedented opportunity to regain this "strategic lost province of unions" presented itself. A National Committee for the organizing of Iron and Steel Workers was set up under the leadership of William Z. Foster. The official plan was to separate all the steel workers by crafts and organize them into local units of their respective trade.<sup>6</sup> However, the new recruit naturally associated with his fellow workers in the shop and it was found easier to organize the workers along industrial lines.<sup>7</sup> But this procedure was frowned upon by the A. F. of L. and the men were allotted to 24 national craft organizations. The failure of the Great Steel Strike of 1919 was ascribed to the greater cohesiveness of the employers' organization and to the fact that the unions supporting the strike were more concerned with prospective jurisdictional rights than with the actual job of organizing the steel workers. As a result of this collapse Foster, who had hoped "to achieve the results of industrial unionism without sacrificing the craft unionism of the American

Federation of Labor" concluded that the steel workers must establish a bona fide, vigorous, industrial union.<sup>8</sup>

Subsequent to the demoralization which followed the failure of the steel campaign, the employers fostered the so-called American Plan. This was an attempt to create company unions along plant lines. Such organizations continued to exist throughout the depression period of 1921 and the period of prosperity between 1923 and 1929.

Between 1920 and 1924 the A. F. of L. lost approximately 30% of its membership in the skilled trades. This chaotic condition was enhanced by the internal dissension in the trade unions led by the so-called left wing blocs. New amalgamations were formed and new jurisdictional provinces granted to the various departments. Despite these haphazard attempts to meet changing economic conditions the A. F. of L. continued to lose membership. In fact, during this Golden Age of prosperity from 1923 to 1929 mass production industries aggressively and consistently fought unionization through a well organized program of what has been termed welfare capitalism. Company unions and employee representation plans, coupled with more subtle devices of "industrial democracy," were sponsored in an effort to merge the workers' interests more closely with those of employers or trade associations.

The crisis of 1929 followed by years of unprecedented unemployment continued the further process of disorganization within the trade union membership. It was not until the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933 that a check was called to the ten year decline.<sup>9</sup> The now famous Section 7A of the N. R. A. which recognized collective bargaining and the workers' right to organize injected a hypodermic into the moribund A. F. of L. which enabled it to reach a membership of almost 4,000,000 within the space of eighteen months. However, the bulk of the increased membership during this period was localized in four industrial unions affiliated with the A. F. of L.: the United Mine Workers, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the Fur Workers. The increase in membership in these unions between 1933 and 1935 was estimated to be 132 per cent but the increase in craft unions was estimated to be only 13 per cent. In the new service unions having a semi-industrial form and structure the increase of membership was approximately 94 per cent.<sup>10</sup>

Almost spontaneously there arose again the cry of organizing the unorganized workers in the mass production industries. Section 7A, it was felt, would facilitate the organization of semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the four leading mass production industries—automobiles, radios, steel, and rubber. The executive council of the A. F. of L. in January, 1934, declared that it “would encourage whatever form of organization seemed best suited to meet the situation and requirements of the mass production workers”<sup>11</sup> although there was to be no treading on the toes of craft unions. The fullest possible latitude was to be exercised in the granting of federal charters, but wherever a temporary infraction of the rights of craft unions was involved the council would have the right to adjust such difficulties in a satisfactory manner.

President Green instructed all A. F. of L. organizers as follows: “It is imperatively necessary that the jurisdictional right of each national and international union affiliated with the A. F. of L. be respected and observed when the unorganized are accepted into membership with organizations affiliated with the A. F. of L. It is especially important that this important rule is observed when non-union workers are organized into federal unions chartered directly by the A. F. of L. Special instructions and advice should be given to the unorganized regarding the jurisdiction of national and international unions. . . .”

“Organizers of the A. F. of L. should not under any circumstances seek to persuade and influence workers who are eligible to membership in national and international unions chartered by the A. F. of L. but should be organized into federal labor unions.”<sup>12</sup>

If these instructions of President Green were to be followed, only a small number of workers would be eligible in the federal labor locals. Such a policy would prevent the chartering of federal unions along industrial lines and certainly would not gain the confidence of newcomers in the A. F. of L.<sup>13</sup> That this was so, is abundantly illustrated by the situation in the mass production industries during the year and a half which followed.

### *Failure to Organize the Automobile Industry*

The automobile industry was said to have pulled the country out of the depression of 1921. In 1930 it produced over three million cars

and by 1935 the motor vehicle manufacturing industries outranked all other American manufacturing industries in the wholesale value of products and in the value of its exports.<sup>14</sup> A few large corporations like General Motors, Chrysler and Ford have always had an open-shop organization and fought unionization through labor espionage and company unions. The minute subdivision, standardization, and simplification of processes have been so developed that the majority of the workers are semi-skilled or unskilled.<sup>15</sup> Ford once estimated that about 80% of his workers were unskilled, being able to learn their specialized tasks within a fortnight.<sup>16</sup> The industry employs a working force of 500,000 with an average of 3,500 workers in one factory. There is usually a large army of surplus workers due to the irregularity and seasonality of the industry and the low degree of skill required.<sup>17</sup> Labor unrest has been notorious in the industry: according to a government report released at the end of 1934, "the unrest flows from insecurity, low annual earnings, inequitable hiring and rehiring methods, espionage, speed-up, and the displacement of workers at an extremely early age."<sup>18</sup>

To forestall discontent and prevent union agitation, the corporations introduced elaborate welfare schemes as well as company unions. The few craft unions officially having jurisdiction over the automobile workers were submissive and non-aggressive. They felt that it would be a distinct menace to their organization to take in large numbers of unskilled workers, and in any case "craft unions are impotent to organize men who have no craft."<sup>19</sup> During the war, to be sure, the United Automobile, Aircraft, and Vehicle Workers, an affiliate of the A. F. of L. made a considerable stir in the plants. In 1921 it was expelled from the A. F. of L. after a jurisdictional dispute which threatened to divide it along craft lines whereas it had had a semi-industrial structure. Although the union claimed a membership of 45,000 in 1920, in 1929 its membership dwindled to 1,500. In that year the T. U. U. L. took over the union and it lost even more of its meager membership.<sup>20</sup>

The A. F. of L. made another gesture to organize the industry in 1926. At its Detroit Convention held in that year the Federation acknowledged the impossibility of organizing the industry through the separate efforts of the seventeen or more craft unions which had jurisdiction over the automobile workers.<sup>21</sup> In announcing the plans

for a general campaign, President Green argued that the craft unions should agree to a temporary "suspension" of their jurisdictional claims but that once the workers were organized "transfers" to proper unions would be effected.<sup>22</sup> Even this maneuver did not satisfy the craft unions; throughout the drive they were lukewarm in their support. One year later it was officially reported that "the campaign to organize the automobile worker . . . has not developed to the extent we had hoped it would."<sup>23</sup> This short and ill-fated attempt to organize the automobile workers deepened the general conviction that "the A. F. of L. was structurally and temperamentally incapable of organizing the so-called production workers in the mass production industries."<sup>24</sup> It also showed that the division into craft groups would stultify any efforts to unionize workers. The effective organization of automobile labor presupposed a "national industrial union" which would bind closely all those engaged in this field of production.<sup>25</sup>

The N. R. A. was responsible for the birth of the Mechanics Educational Society, the Associated Automobile Workers, and the Automobile Industrial Workers Association, independent unions offering some challenge to the A. F. of L. union. In June 1933, the Mechanics Educational Society initiated a spectacular organizational campaign among the tool and die men. A number of strikes were called and 25,000 new members rallied to the organization. The M. E. S. A. then rewrote its constitution to form a semi-industrial union taking under its jurisdiction production and assembly workers as well as trained mechanics.

Alarmed at this new turn of events, the A. F. of L. began to swing into action. Realizing from past experience that the workers would respond to nothing but industrial unionism, it decided to organize the automobile workers in federal locals under the supervision of the Federation itself, removed from the jurisdiction of the craft unions. The organizational plan was as follows:

"Each industrial plant engaged in the manufacturing of automobiles shall be the unit of organizations. Each plant shall be organized into a federal labor union under a charter granted by the A. F. of L."<sup>26</sup> Some confusion prevailed among the organizers as to whether the local industrial organization would later be consolidated into a national industrial union or broken up into craft divisions. For the most part they assumed that the latter policy was more probable.<sup>27</sup>

The initial drive conducted under the leadership of William Collins, a veteran A. F. of L. organizer, met with an enthusiastic response. Thousands of production workers were enrolled weekly and by October, 1934, there were affiliated with the A. F. of L. 164 federal local unions with an estimated membership of 100,000.

The automobile corporations, however, were ready to fight any challenge to their absolute control. They drew up a code for the industry which was a severe blow to labor—even the famous Section 7A was vitiated by a “merit clause.”<sup>28</sup> They likewise proceeded to form company unions on a more elaborate scale than heretofore and to discharge summarily active union members.

But automobile labor, after thirteen years of inaction, had found its strength and was bent on using it. In the spring of 1934 a general strike to secure union recognition in the automobile industry was threatened. At this point President Roosevelt, after making clear that he favored “no particular union or particular form of employee organization or representative,” drew up a compromise “settlement” by which a non-partisan Automobile Labor Board would decide questions governing representation, discrimination, and other matters in dispute.” American capitalists praised Roosevelt for giving such “strong support to the company union idea.”<sup>29</sup> This Board formulated an election policy which was so obviously unfair that President Green advised abstention from voting.” Although Leo Wolman, its chairman, contended that the Board had stimulated a “development of trade unionism,”<sup>30</sup> the actual fact of the matter was that with its tacit approval company unionism and espionage took a new lease on life.

In June, 1934, the various locals arranged a conference to discuss ways and means of retrenching themselves and of making a counter attack on the companies. In order “to coordinate the work of the unions” a national council was formed.” This council had only advisory powers and was placed under the supervision of “appointed officials with a craft outlook.”<sup>31</sup> The automobile workers were incensed by this treatment and began to press for a national industrial union. The growing independent unions were ready to affiliate with the A. F. of L. on an industrial basis.”

In the autumn of 1935 the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. sanctioned the granting of a charter to the automobile locals for the

formation of a national union. The charter authorized the union to include all workers directly engaged in the manufacture of automobile parts exclusive of the tool and die makers and the workers in job or contract shops manufacturing parts. The officials of the new union were to be designated by President Green, and not to be elected democratically by the members. Green warned the Automobile Workers Union against recruiting any workers "over whom existing craft unions claimed jurisdiction."<sup>38</sup> At the A. F. of L. Convention the following year the delegates from the United Automobile Workers Union appealed for the right of self-government and pleaded that the disastrous policy of separatism be abandoned. But they petitioned in vain; their resolutions were overwhelmingly defeated by the craft union bloc. The workers became discouraged by such hypocrisy and the membership decreased to about 10,000.

### *The Failure to Organize the Rubber Industry*

The attempt to organize another mass production industry, rubber, was but another example of the failure of craft unionism. A large part of this industry feeds the automobile industry and the industrial policies affecting the latter find repercussions in the former.<sup>39</sup> The tire industry today has a productive capacity of 75 million tires per annum with a market for not more than 30 millions.<sup>40</sup> This excess plant capacity results in vicious price cutting, ruinous selling policies and a relentless drive for reductions in cost marked by a constantly increasing speed-up of workers at steadily decreasing wages. Espionage systems, black lists, and company unions have been prevalent in the industry since the famous strike of 1913 and were successful in keeping the rubber workers unorganized.<sup>41</sup>

In July, 1933, independent industrial unions were created among the rubber workers. Enthusiasm ran like wild-fire among the workers and the threat of independent unionism finally pushed the A. F. of L. into the field. The independent groups, with a membership of about 40,000, readily agreed to join the A. F. of L. and applied for federal charters.<sup>42</sup> Instead of consolidating the workers into an organic whole through the medium of industrial unionism, the A. F. of L. again proceeded to construct jurisdictional boundaries. Sixteen recognized jurisdictions came under the rubber industry in addition to those who built tires or fabricated rubber products.<sup>43</sup> This division of the workers

seriously weakened the locals and caused the membership to dwindle. Late in 1934 a progressive bloc of workers got the upper hand in the United Rubber Workers Council which had been organized about the same time as the Automobile Workers Council and consisted of 75 federal locals. They resisted any further attempts to break up the industrial locals into craft divisions and forced the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. to give them an international charter. This charter, granted in September 1935, however, denied them jurisdiction over those "who construct buildings, manufacture or install machinery, or engage in maintenance work or work outside the factories."<sup>43</sup> When the Rubber Workers International Union appealed for a complete industrial charter at the Atlantic City Convention in 1935, its delegation was ruled off the floor and the resolution defeated.<sup>44</sup>

### *Steel Again*

Between 1920 and 1933 little effort was made to organize the half million workers engaged in producing steel. Less than ten per cent of the eligible workers enrolled in the steel union, but the actual number of members at any given time was even more infinitesimal if one takes into account the high rate of turnover. The Amalgamated Association was "on the toboggan," existing largely by sufferance of a few employers. The A. F. of L.'s steadfast policy of "craft separatism" continued to "play an important role in retarding unionism."<sup>45</sup> So feeble had the Amalgamated become that it lacked the strength (and the courage) to take advantage of the proffered opportunity for organization during the first few months of the Recovery Act. On June 17, 1933, Green exhorted "Old Mike" Tighe to start "an immediate organizing campaign to offset the company unions which the steel barons were pushing forward."<sup>46</sup> But that labor leader, fearful of destroying the system whereby the Amalgamated was tolerated in a few skilled crafts, was disposed to allow the steel industry to go by default. While he stalled, the steel industry adopted a code which, as one of their organs jubilantly asserted, left "the way open for company unions."<sup>47</sup> New company unions were organized and those already in existence were altered to conform to Section 7A.<sup>48</sup> By October, 1933, company unions were being operated in approximately 85 per cent of the industry.<sup>49</sup>

This situation finally forced Tighe to send organizers to the key

centers. Much to his surprise the response, as in the case of the automobile and rubber industries, was enthusiastic and the Amalgamated suddenly became a virile body! A number of militant local leaders in the steel industry demanded "an aggressive campaign for union recognition, to be backed up, if necessary, by a general strike in the industry." " Over the head of Tighe who declared "we ain't a strike organization," strike plans were ratified in April, 1934. But as a result of a series of maneuvers initiated by President Roosevelt and Hugh Johnson, carried out by Tighe, and not too vigorously combatted by the 30,000 members of the Amalgamated, the strike plans were abandoned. This was done on the explicit understanding that the government would create an "impartial board of three" with authority to consider violations of the new steel code and to adjust labor disputes." Unfavorable decisions of the Steel Labor Relations Board were never accepted by the steel corporations. Company unionism became "more firmly entrenched in the iron and steel industry than ever before." " Again labor lost faith in the government and became convinced that to secure concessions it must rely upon its own independent activity.

At the San Francisco Convention in 1934 the question of organizing steel was raised by John L. Lewis, the president of the United Mine Workers of America, for whom the issue meant the life and death of his people. So many of the coal mines were controlled by steel corporations that the very existence of unionism in the coal industry depended upon organization in steel. It was finally decided that the A. F. of L. should "at the earliest practical date inaugurate, manage, promote and conduct a campaign of organization in the iron and steel industry." The timorous and dilatory leaders of the Amalgamated were repudiated "for their failure to make progress" and the burden of organization was placed on an enlarged Executive Council of the A. F. of L."

This program, however, was never carried into effect, for the Executive Council refused to take any steps to unionize the industry along the only feasible lines, namely, industrial organization. The Amalgamated lapsed into a state of lethargy and devoted its time and efforts to carrying out periodical "purges" of younger, more radical local leaders. In March, 1935, Tighe revoked the charters of eleven locals which had demanded a "bold and intensive organizational

drive among steel workers" based on a thorough-going "program of industrial unionism." " Six months later the Amalgamated had a membership of less than 9,000. To such low depths had the tragic policy of craft separatism and sabotage brought the steel union!

This account of organization among the steel, auto, and rubber workers holds for the other mass production industries as well, save that in aluminum, radio, and cement even less headway was made. With a few insignificant exceptions the conflict arose "between workers who felt they must have one union, and craft organizations who wanted each to take its share." " For the most part, the insatiable craft claims were the greatest single barrier to organization. Because of craft "raids" and the A. F. of L.'s refusal to grant satisfactory charters to newly organized groups, about one-third of the mass production workers organized in federal locals were either driven out or forced to drop out.

The conclusion is inescapable that the A. F. of L. was either unwilling or unable to organize the unorganized, except under such conditions as made it impossible for them to be organized.

## CHAPTER V. THE ATLANTIC CITY CONVENTION OF THE A. F. OF L.

THE CONVENTION of the A. F. of L. held in San Francisco in 1934, which passed the resolution directing that the principle of vertical unionism be applied in the basic industries, also directed the executive council to grant industrial charters to the auto, rubber, and cement workers, and to protect the right of existing craft unions. After the convention, however, the interpretations of the executive council with reference to the newly formed federal unions, tended to destroy the so-called victory for the industrial unionists. The automobile and rubber workers were granted charters limited in scope. The new unions became recruiting agencies for old craft unions. The psychological and economic effect upon the workers was devastating. It was no secret that the new federal locals were disappointed by the failure of the executive council to carry out the spirit of the San Francisco mandate. The industrial bloc realized how futile was the effect of the San Francisco resolution when the spirit behind it was so obviously craft-minded. Holding that "the central problem of labor today is its form and structure," and prophesying

that "retention of the status quo would lead to obsolescence," John Lewis made a fervent appeal for "realistic organization."<sup>1</sup> In response John Frey, chairman of the metal trades department of the A. F. of L., and defender of craft unionism, challenged the adherent of vertical unionism to meet the crafts in debate, with American labor as final arbiter.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the November 1935 Convention of the A. F. of L. there were definite acts of sabotage by the old craft unions. The most significant\* occurred in the International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union which had received a semi-industrial charter from the A. F. of L. in 1911 granting jurisdiction over all workers "working in and around the mills." In 1935 a strike was called in the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. In the course of the strike the 22 unions affiliated with the metal trades department of the A. F. of L. signed separate agreements with the company for the 600 workers over whom they could claim jurisdiction. The International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers appealed to the Atlantic City convention held in November, 1935, and the case became the pivot for another struggle between industrial unionism and craft unionism. The action of the metal trades department was upheld by the same margin by which the claims of the automobile and rubber workers were defeated.

In its report to the Atlantic City convention the executive council explained that its failure to carry on the unionization drive in the steel industry was due to the internal strife in the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers. Furthermore it declared that, while preliminary steps had been taken in other mass production industries, the general sentiment among its members was that the time was not opportune for the establishment of national unions!

This state of affairs was responsible for the crystallization of the industrial union bloc at the Atlantic City convention. Max Zaritsky, present general secretary of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union, declared that organization methods and structure would have to change if his union were not to become impotent as an instrument for the protection of the workers. The Typographical Union and many city and state federations joined the industrial union bloc in the convention in its fight to modernize the A. F. of L.'s organizational policy. The Resolutions Committee was asked to consider 9 resolutions for charters establishing industrial

unions in specific industries and 13 resolutions calling for the setting up of industrial unions to replace existing national unions.'

While the committee was considering these resolutions several preliminary skirmishes were held which threw the conservative majority into confusion. John Lewis forced Matthew Woll to resign from the National Civic Federation, an organization in which Samuel Gompers once joined hands with leaders of capital "for the maintenance of industrial peace." ' The lucrative advertisements by open-shop employers in *The Federationist*, the monthly magazine of the A. F. of L., were cancelled. A proposed amendment to prohibit "representation or recognition on any A. F. of L. body to any organization or person that has seceded, or has been suspended or expelled" was replaced by a resolution barring Communists from central city councils and state federations. The original resolution was a drastic if clumsy attempt to use the "red menace" as a disguise for empowering the executive council to rout the industrial unions.'

The focus of attention of the convention was centered upon the reports of the Resolutions Committee. The majority of the committee, led by Matthew Woll and John Frey, advised a reaffirmation of the San Francisco declaration and recommended non-concurrence with the industrial union resolutions. In other words, it would restrict the jurisdiction of industrial unions chartered by the executive council and would permit the craft unions to claim craftsmen organized into federal labor unions and industrial unions.

All the heavy artillery of the industrial unionists was aimed at "horse and buggy craftism." Charles Howard, President of the Typographical Union, spoke for the minority report, emphasizing the enormous loss in membership due to jurisdictional disputes among crafts in the mass production industries and demonstrating how these would disappear once a broader form was adopted. A plea was made against "organized scabbery", i. e., union members in different crafts fighting each other, to their common injury, or special skilled groups making agreements at the expense of other laborers in the same establishment.' The clinching fact was cited by John Lewis: "twenty-five years of constant, unbroken failure" by craft unionists to organize the thirty-six millions of unorganized workers. This was ascribed to labor's inability to organize on a front co-extensive with the "giant combinations of capital," and to the Federation's policy of dividing

workers into crafts and not uniting them on an industrial basis. The minority report concluded with a fervent appeal for the Federation to meet present-day needs by promoting industrial unionism in the mass production industries.'

The craft union adherents refused to discuss the questions raised by Lewis. To John Frey the idea of industrial unionism was alien to the American tradition, being "an exotic importation of groups who do not believe in the A. F. of L." This failed to take into consideration the compromises which international unions of the A. F. of L. had already made to meet the changing structure of industry as well as the annual resolutions reaffirming the principle of industrial unionism. Such paper concessions were merely face-saving gestures and were invariably violated in both spirit and practice.

A number of sincere unionists justified their adherence to craft unions by the results though these results seem pitiful when we examine the actual numbers of workers organized in craft unions:'

TABLE I. EXTENT OF ORGANIZATION IN CRAFT UNIONS'

<i>Trade</i>	<i>No. of workers in trade (1930 census)</i>	<i>No. of members in A.F.L. craft unions, 1932</i>
Blacksmiths, forgemen and hammer-men	147,460	Blacksmiths Union ..... 5,000
Boilermakers .....	49,925	Boilermakers Union ..... 15,000
Brick and stone masons, tile layers .....	170,896	Bricklayers Union ..... 56,700
Carpenters .....	929,376	Carpenters Union ..... 290,000
Electricians .....	280,279	Electrical Brotherhood....139,000
Machinists, millwrights and toolmakers..	761,075	Machinists Union ..... 70,700
Painters, glaziers:		
Building .....	429,982	Painters Union
In factories .....	89,546	79,600
Plasterers, cement finishers .....	85,477	Plasterers Union ..... 35,300
Plumbers, gas and steamfitters .....	237,813	Plumbers Union ..... 45,000
Chauffeurs, truck, tractor drivers .....	970,916	Teamsters Union ..... 82,000
Draymen, teamsters .....	111,178	

TABLE II. EXTENT OF ORGANIZATION IN INDUSTRIAL AND SEMI-INDUSTRIAL UNIONS

1. CLOTHING, EXCEPT BOOTS AND SHOES	1933
Number of Wage Earners .....	471,175
Union Membership	
Cloth Hat and Cap Workers .....	6,100
Clothing Workers, Amalgamated .....	118,500
Fur Workers .....	3,100
Garment Workers, United.....	38,800
Glove Workers .....	500
Hatters .....	7,600

Ladies' Garment Workers .....	144,300
Tailors .....	6,600
Total Union Membership .....	325,500
Percentage organized .....	69.1

2. COAL MINING	1933	1934
Number of Wage Earners .....	523,336	567,061
Union Membership .....	321,800	513,800
Percentage Organized .....	61.5	90.6

John Frey stated that "industrial unions have never been able to hold their own." But we have already indicated in an earlier chapter the extent to which the industrial unions increased in membership between 1933-1937 (some 57 per cent) whereas craft union membership increased only 14 per cent.<sup>10</sup>

Another argument presented was that the Federation must uphold the sacredness of contracts, that is, of the jurisdiction granted to its affiliates. This was decidedly hypocritical in the face of the decision made at the convention against the United Mine and Smelter Workers Union who had received their jurisdiction in 1911. But as this was a touchy point Philip Murray of the United Mine Workers cautiously answered: "Not a single sentence of the minority report... would deprive a single craft organization of a member of their unions."<sup>11</sup> The new unions in the mass production industries were petitioning for the recognition of an accomplished fact, and the freedom from interference in working out their destinies.

To the objection raised that trained workers required special protection in factory industries, the industrial union bloc answered that their skill was always considered in wage and special demands, that they could receive an interchangeable union card, and that they could have the backing of the entire working force of a plant instead of facing the employer as a small group.<sup>12</sup>

The minority report was defeated by a vote of 18,024 to 10,933—788 delegates abstaining from voting. The industrial union bloc was defeated, but Lewis pointed out that nearly 40 per cent of the A. F. of L. membership supported its recommendation—the greatest endorsement of industrial unionism in the history of the Federation. As one progressive delegate reported: "The progressive ranks will grow during the next few years, and as they grow, new issues will be brought into the struggle. How long this fight will last, no one knows. One thing is certain, there can be no retreat."<sup>13</sup>

## CHAPTER VI. THE C. I. O.—A DUAL ORGANIZATION?

THE DAY AFTER the close of the convention, (October 19th) leaders of the industrial union bloc decided to meet in Washington on November 9th to consider next steps. The conflict had become not only one of principle but a bitter clash between personalities and vested interests. John L. Lewis, the president of the United Mine Workers, and the leader in the move for industrial unionism, is a dynamic, aggressive, heavy-set individual with a leonine head, a booming voice and a ruthlessness of manner that brooks little opposition.' He has frequently been accused of being unable to compromise, of being extremely ambitious both for himself and his organization. Sidney Hillman is president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, an organization that has been an industrial union from its inception. Hillman is a good speaker, a shrewd negotiator, diplomatic, and a traditional progressive. David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, is hard-working, shrewd, rather limited in his oratorical powers, and a former Socialist.

The other members of the industrial union bloc which met in Washington included Charles P. Howard of the International Typographical Union, Harvey C. Fremming of the Oil Field, Gas, Well and Refinery Workers, Thomas F. McMahon of the United Textile Workers, M. Zaritsky of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union, and Thomas Brown of the International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. This group of eight international unions formed the nucleus of the Committee for Industrial Organization, whose avowed purpose was "to encourage and promote the organization of workers in the mass production and unorganized industries of the nation and affiliation with the American Federation of Labor." To direct the work of the C.I.O., John Brophy, a former progressive of the United Mine Workers and erstwhile opponent of Lewis, was selected. At the same time John Lewis resigned as vice-president of the American Federation of Labor.

President Green was stunned by the disquieting course of events and sent an open letter to all the C. I. O. members, expressing his feelings of apprehension and deep concern over this overt and unprecedented action to "organize within an organization" and warned of the

dangers of schism. The C. I. O. answered this letter with the statement that adequate precedent was to be found in the history of the Federation. The Conference for Progressive Political Action, formed in 1922, included unions and other organizations outside of the American Federation of Labor and nevertheless was acceptable to the executive council. Furthermore, the Railway Labor Executives Association which includes unions not in the A. F. of L. and some that have jurisdictional disputes with the affiliated unions, had also been recognized by the A. F. of L. The C. I. O. did not propose to raid existing craft unions. Instead of fostering dualism it aimed to alter the policy which invited it. The United Textile Workers was used as an example of how dual unions might be absorbed through an intensive organization of the unorganized along industrial lines. "If it means leaving the Federation to achieve this essential object of all organized labor," said Lewis "that we will do sooner than abandon the rights of the thirty million workers." In that case the burden of proof of the charge of dualism would rest upon the American Federation of Labor.

In a personal note to President Green, Lewis exhorted him to return to his "father's house." If the President of the A. F. of L. would disassociate himself from his present position, he could become chairman of the C. I. O. at an honorarium equivalent to that which he was then receiving. Referring to President Green's statement made in 1917 that "the organization of men by industry rather than crafts brings about a more perfect organization, closer cooperation, and tends to develop the highest form of organization,"<sup>2</sup> Lewis stated "You would have the satisfaction of supporting a cause in which you believe inherently and of contributing your fine abilities to the achievement of an enlarged opportunity for the nation's workers." President Green telegraphed on December 8th that "under no circumstances would I accept any offer to head another organization within the Federation." The conflict was becoming crystallized around the personalities of John L. Lewis and William Green.<sup>3</sup> About Green who was never a popular or dynamic leader, and John Frey, his associate, it can be said that history frequently creates "circumstances and relationships that enable grotesque mediocrities to strut about in heroes' garb."<sup>4</sup>

The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor at its meeting in Miami, January 1936, questioned the legality of the C. I. O. and demanded punishment for its members. Howard of the Typo-

graphical Workers Union defended the C. I. O. and stated that it was no more illegal to promote the organization of industrial unionism than it was to further the organization of craft unions. It was decided by a vote of 11 to 6 to urge the C. I. O. to dissolve and to cease activities which "might constitute a challenge to the supremacy of the A. F. of L." A committee was appointed to confer with the C. I. O. and to work out a solution to the controversy.

President Green, appealing personally, as guest speaker at the United Mine Workers convention, urged the dissolution of the C. I. O. However, the convention almost unanimously repudiated the "Miami ultimatum." Turning to Green after the vote was taken, Lewis quietly remarked: "There is no need for me to amplify in mere words principles so deep-seated and pronounced as exist on this question." After this rebuff, President Green ordered all labor bodies affiliated with the Federation to ignore the C. I. O. Mr. Dubinsky, the president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, answered President Green with the statement that the C. I. O. preached unity, not schism. Announcement was also made that the C. I. O. would support the 30,000 radio workers who had recently rejected the proposal of the Executive Council that they become Class B members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. This group felt that it could function only on an industrial basis and refused to accept affiliation with the craft organization. The third and most powerful statement was the announcement that the C. I. O. unions had pledged \$500,000 (of a total of a million five hundred thousand) for the purpose of carrying on intensive organization in the steel industry. The C. I. O. unions offered to contribute as well, trained organizers from their respective staffs. The sole proviso was that organization must be along industrial lines and that "the leadership of the campaign must be such as to inspire confidence of success."

*The struggle between craft and industrial unionism was now linked with the issue of organizing the steel industry.* The C. I. O. had taken the bull by the horns! President Green replied to the C. I. O. that he would submit their offer of aid to the executive council of the A. F. of L. which alone "is clothed with authority to pass-upon the conditions you make." In May, a counter-proposal was presented to the C. I. O. reserving the right of the executive council to manage the campaign, and providing that the jurisdictional rights of all craft

unions be respected. With pompous bravado President Green threatened the steel barons that the organization drive would soon get under way "even if we haven't a dollar." Curiously enough none of the craft unions represented on the executive council was willing to contribute money or organize assistance to such a joint campaign.

Meanwhile the C. I. O. prevailed upon the Amalgamated Association to capitalize the growing restlessness in the steel industry. That union adopted a resolution urging the cooperation of all unions, both A. F. of L. and C. I. O., but urged that craft organizations waive their minor jurisdictional claims in the steel industry. The craft unions refused to surrender their "proprietary rights" and the Amalgamated Association joined the C. I. O. A steel workers' organizing committee was formed under the capable direction of Philip Murray, vice-president of the United Mine Workers, and an intensive program of organization and propaganda was started in the key centers of the steel industry. The American Iron and Steel Institute, a trade association which includes 95 per cent of the steel production of the country and represents a corporate investment of \$5,000,000,000, perceived that the C. I. O. was in earnest. It published a full page advertisement in 375 newspapers at an estimated cost of \$400,000 announcing that its members were ready to employ their resources to the full to prevent union organization of their employees.\*

The C. I. O. unions were invited to appear before the July session of the executive council to show cause why the C. I. O. and the Steel Workers Organizing Committee should not be dissolved. None of the C. I. O. unions appeared. The council then served formal notice on them to answer charges on August 5th of "fostering dualism and fomenting insurrection within the A. F. of L." The Federation was not against organization nor for that matter did it "oppose" industrial unionism. What was at stake was the "principle of democratic procedure and majority rule."† Those who disagreed with the action of the majority were accorded "the right to urge the acceptance of their point of view at succeeding conventions."‡

The issue of democratic procedure was a new one. It is true that the industrial bloc failed to secure a majority vote on their resolutions at the convention. As President Howard of the Typographical Union pointed out, however, "When a decision upon internal policies was adopted the rights and privileges of the minority could not be con-

financed as President Green would have it, merely to urging the acceptance of its point of view at succeeding conventions." Such a restriction prevented the minority from discussing the issues in the regular organizational channels and from attempting "to convert those whose interests were most affected—the Rank and File."

The concept of democracy has been an effective instrument in the hands of a ruling clique under peaceful and stable conditions. But in a struggle for power it becomes inconvenient and recourse is made often under the guise of "democracy" to dictatorial practices. In the name of democracy, therefore, the executive council adopted an enabling clause determining the procedure for trial and punishment of an international union—an obvious move to pave the way for the suspension of the C. I. O. unions. The C. I. O. members claimed that the entire procedure of the executive council was illegal, for never before had the council terminated the affiliation of an international union without a regular convention vote. The A. F. of L. constitution, as amended in 1907, states that the right to expel or suspend is vested solely in the annual convention, in which a two-third roll-call vote to that effect is necessary. In 1911 President Gompers called attention to the fact that "under this law the executive council has no power to suspend an international union." "The fullest limit to which our authority (speaking of the executive council) extends is to make such report and recommendations to the forthcoming convention of the A. F. of L."\*

The old line craft unions found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. If the C. I. O. unions were not suspended they might persuade other organizations to their point of view, and threaten the power of the leaders of the executive council. On the other hand if suspension were decreed a split in the ranks of labor was imminent. The executive council's mind was made up by Hutchinson of the Carpenters Union, who threatened to leave the A. F. of L. if Lewis and his C. I. O. associates went unpunished. He declared in effect to the craft union bloc: "If I leave the A. F. of L. with my 3,000 votes Lewis will get control and where will your jurisdiction be then?" The executive council acting as prosecutor, judge and jury, moved the suspension of the C. I. O. by a vote of 13 to 1. Dubinsky of the I.L.G.W.U. and a member of the C. I. O. cast the sole vote against the motion and soon resigned from the executive council. The suspension of the C. I. O.

unions was to be automatic on September 5, 1936, but if any union withdrew from the C. I. O. before that date, its breach of contractual obligation would be forgiven.

The suspension of the C. I. O. unions was met by a storm of protests expressed in hundreds of resolutions from local unions. This protest was so unexpected that the executive council altered its original plan of demanding that locals of the suspended unions be ousted from regional bodies, such as the state federations of labor, city central trades bodies, etc. As matters stood, however, August 5, 1936, witnessed the virtual ousting of almost one-third of the total membership of the A. F. of L.<sup>10</sup>

	<i>Membership</i>
American Federation of Labor .....	3,317,100
Unions affiliated with the C.I.O.:	
Ten suspended unions, total .....	1,022,100
United Mine Workers .....	507,200
Amalgamated Clothing Workers .....	135,000
International Ladies Garment Workers .....	220,000
United Textile Workers .....	79,200
Oil Field, Gas Well and Refinery Workers .....	43,500
Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers .....	14,600
Federation of Flat Glass Workers .....	14,000
United Automobile Workers .....	250,000
United Rubber Workers .....	50,000
Iron, Steel and Tin Workers .....	8,600
Two unions not suspended, total .....	95,000
United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers.....	21,400
International Typographical Union .....	73,600
Status uncertain	
United Electrical and Radio Workers .....	30,000

### *Peace Overtures*

Moderates on both sides began to press for peace. Zaritsky of the United Hatters Union used the convention of that organization for the presentation of a resolution urging a truce between the factions. It was suggested first that the ten unions affiliated with the C. I. O. and suspended by the executive council be permitted representation in the Tampa convention of the A. F. of L. The merits of the controversy and the issues involved were to be left to the decision of the convention. Secondly, the council, pending adjudication of the dispute, was to name a subcommittee to meet with a similar subcommittee of the C. I. O. "for the purpose of jointly exploring the possibilities of reconciling existing differences and of finding a formula by which the hopes of all workers for the unity of the labor movement and the or-

ganization of the workers in the mass production industries may be realized." <sup>11</sup>

The executive council was willing to agree to the second part of this resolution and instructed Harrison, Woll, and Knight to act as a subcommittee. It ignored the first part of the resolution by refusing to make "commitments or stipulations." The executive council declared that reinstatement was based upon a dissolution of the C. I. O. Lewis declared that all negotiations must be contingent upon the rescinding of the suspension decree. Furthermore, the C. I. O. stated that it did not think that reinstatement of the suspended unions would solve all ills: "To restore unity by lifting the illegal suspension would not settle the life and death issue raised by the C. I. O., namely, the organization of the basic industries. It would not absolve the council of the criminal neglect of labor's interests with which it is charged. It would merely indicate a willingness to relinquish the unconstitutional powers which the council usurped by disfranchising the C. I. O. unions—to allow the issue to be fought out through such democratic channels as the A. F. of L. constitutionally provides." <sup>12</sup>

The subcommittee tried to capitalize the differences of opinion within the C. I. O. by asking individual members to meet with it personally. Zaritsky succeeded in convincing Lewis to advance the date when the C. I. O. would convene in order to allow time for negotiations before the A. F. of L. convention. While he and Dubinsky of the I.L.G.W.U. were considered moderates in the C. I. O. bloc, both spurned the splitting tactics of the subcommittee and declared that action leading to unity must be collective. On November 7, 1936, almost a year to the day after its formation, the C. I. O. unions met in conference to survey their record. Murray declared that the Steel Workers Organization Committee was sweeping everything before it. Half of the company unions in the steel industry were sympathetic to the steel union. "A hundred thousand new members were enrolled in the union." The task of coordinating the new lodges in the industry and whipping them into a well organized national union would be solved by a national convention soon to be held. <sup>13</sup> Encouraging news was likewise received from the flat-glass, automobile, and rubber industries. The United Electrical and Radio Workers of America, with a membership of 30,000 and the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America, with a membership of 10,000, applied for admission to the

C. I. O. The C. I. O., however, made it plain that it would strive to have the A. F. of L. induct these unions provided that no "raids" were to be engineered or democratic rights suppressed. "If that be dualism," challenged Lewis, "let Green make the most of it." This was in the nature of a gesture, however, since both unions had been refused charters by the A. F. of L. because of jurisdictional conflict.

After some deliberation the C. I. O. unions decided that further conferences with the sub-committee would be futile, and official delegates should not be sent to the Tampa convention. President Green, in a caustic address to the Metal Trades Department of the A. F. of L. assailed the "rebel unions for invading the field with their vaporous ideas" and predicted that when their inevitable collapse took place, the A. F. of L. would step in and do the job! John Frey charged the C. I. O. with opening labor's door to the reds. Resolutions were drafted to be introduced at the Tampa convention, calling for the expulsion of the C. I. O. members and a boycott of the union labels of these groups. On the other hand the United Mine Workers summoned Green to answer charges of conspiracy, failure to conform to its policies, and fraternization with its avowed enemies. Green, who had already taken the precaution to join the American Federation of Musicians, said that on the basis of his 30 years of service it was inconceivable for the United Mine Workers to give serious consideration to the alleged complaint. Peace overtures collapsed and the stage was set for the 56th annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, November, 1936.

In his opening address at this convention, Green pleaded that the fratricidal warfare should not absorb the attention of the assembled delegates. "We cannot afford," insisted Green, "to permit internal dissension to be the question of primary importance."<sup>10</sup> Contrary to his expressed desire the C. I. O.—A. F. of L. feud transcended in importance all other issues, most of which were given merely cursory notice."

The C. I. O. unions were invited at the outset to "take their seats" and fight the differences "in man fashion." How they could be seated without credentials and whether their suspensions would be lifted were not explained. The first formal move against the C. I. O. was taken in a resolution urging a boycott of the union label of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and implying similar action against the Millinery Workers and the Typographical Union. This action was

instigated, Green's contention to the contrary notwithstanding, by sheer malice and by a hope of intimidating the C. I. O. unions into submission."<sup>19</sup>

The Resolutions Committee submitted a majority report whitewashing the executive council. It understood that the drastic act of suspension did not mean "permanent severance," approved continuation of the special committee so as "to discover a basis of settlement," and, if no agreement could be reached, authorized the executive council "to call a special convention to take such further steps and actions as the emergency of the situation may then demand."<sup>20</sup> Many vacillating elements accepted this as a sincere peace move and jubilantly exclaimed: "The door is left open for conciliation."<sup>21</sup> Offered as a peace proposal, it was actually a first rate declaration of war and made the split inevitable. It was, as one critic has put it, a document "so bitter in tone and drastic in prescription that it virtually destroyed whatever chances there may have been of returning the C. I. O. unions to their rightful place in the Federation."<sup>22</sup>

Zaritsky, acting spokesman for the decimated industrial bloc, revealed that the council had sabotaged unity negotiations. The other speeches which were made were perfunctory with little of the anticipated drama. The outcome was, of course, a foregone conclusion. The suspended unions were absent, there was no minority report around which to rally the opposition, and moderates like George Berry voted favorably on the council's resolution because of a desire not to antagonize the craft leaders. The decisions of the council received the sanction of the convention by a vote of 21,679 to 2,043.

The significance of the majority report goes beyond its surface meaning. The structure of the A. F. of L. was transformed from a voluntary federation to a centralized body with tremendous authority concentrated in the hands of the executive council. The "enabling clause" procedure of suspending recalcitrant unions to assure majority control gave the council virtual power to perpetuate itself and its policies. This device, to quote Howard, placed "every international union at the mercy of any combination that can arrange a majority of the council."<sup>23</sup> To punish them for their persistent support in behalf of industrial unionism, the right of the federal locals and central bodies to introduce resolutions was drastically curtailed. The autonomy of central labor unions was curbed, by making it virtually im-

possible for them to declare a boycott in time to make it effective. These measures, taken as a whole, were calculated to insure the continued supremacy of craftism.

## CHAPTER VII. SIGNIFICANCE OF RECENT TRENDS IN THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT

AS THE NEW YEAR rolled around, one thing became certain: Either the C. I. O. would succeed in the basic industries, or it would collapse under the combined opposition of finance capital and the A. F. of L. With tremendous energy, enthusiasm and courage the leaders of the C. I. O. took up their organization activities—and defied or ignored the opposition of craft unions.

Immediately after the convention, peace feelers were made to induce Lewis and the other leaders to a joint conference. It was hinted that the suspensions would be lifted following negotiations. However, the January 1937 issue of the Teamsters' International Bulletin crystallized the attitude of the old-line craftists: "No central body or State Federation has the right to go against the policy of the A. F. of L. and pass resolutions for industrial unionism." Subsequently several C. I. O. members were expelled from the Cleveland city trades and labor council. In March, President Green widened the rift by issuing the following circular letter: "The issue is made clear and the line is drawn. Workers cannot be for both the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. . . . The officers and members of state federations of labor, city central bodies and local unions must renew their pledge of loyalty and devotion to the A. F. of L. and to the principles and policies which it represents." In effect this letter urged the regional affiliates of the A. F. of L. to oust the C. I. O. unions from their midst.

The split which is becoming more complete is transforming the C. I. O. into a new federation representing the aspirations and interests of the bulk of the American workers. Indeed the C. I. O. has already taken on some form of centralized structure. Because of the expulsion orders of the A. F. of L. the officials of the C. I. O. were authorized to issue certificates of affiliation to all groups "whenever it is deemed such action is advisable."<sup>1</sup> The execution of all policies depends upon the action of the committee of union presidents. Such a pattern of control offers many advantages in a campaign of organization.

There is always the danger that group interests may be subordinated to the personal aggrandizement of leaders.' However much one may regret the schism, it was made inevitable by the inability of the A. F. of L. to adjust itself to prevailing economic tendencies, by a sectarian opposition to organizing the unorganized, and by a bitter clash of personalities. The C. I. O. seems to be superseding the A. F. of L. even as the latter superseded the Knights of Labor—because of the economic demands of the time and the inability of the old structure to meet those demands satisfactorily.

In estimating the future of the C. I. O., it is important to refute the statements made by craft leaders that the C. I. O. is the last in a long line of dualistic revolutionary sects. It is creating deliberate confusion and misunderstanding to state that the industrial unionism of the C. I. O. is on the same plane with that of the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance or the Trade Union Unity League. The latter organizations were concerned with carrying on propaganda for their own revolutionary credos. They hinged their hopes for success on splitting the A. F. of L. because of what they conceived to be its *anti-proletarian character*. The C. I. O., however, is composed of powerful unions formerly affiliated with the A. F. of L. and had formulated its program in an effort to strengthen that organization. It has urged its sympathizers within the A. F. of L. to fight for cooperation with the policies of the C. I. O. and has even encouraged organizational drives by craft unions in local communities. In these respects the distinction between the past dualist organizations and the C. I. O. can be definitely observed.

Furthermore, the C. I. O. has espoused no revolutionary political philosophy. In certain isolated instances Government agencies like the National Labor Relations Board have intervened in the increasing number of labor disputes of the last few years. Their decision as to the proper unit for collective bargaining will determine, as has been suggested, whether the craft or industrial union will become the dominant pattern of an industry. If the C. I. O. organization represents the majority of the workers in a mass production industry, that union will undoubtedly be accepted as the unit for collective bargaining. When the United Automobile Workers of America recently succeeded in its negotiations with General Motors in securing union recognition and other major concessions, President Green released a statement to the

press calling the terms a "surrender and a blow" to organized labor. Industrial leaders were aware, however, that unless the C. I. O. was turned back, the victory in the automobile industry would prove to be "the opening wedge for the introduction of the closed shop in all mass production industries." This prophecy proved to be correct, for recent developments show that the C. I. O. has made rapid strides in organizing one industry after another.

The Steel Workers Organizing Committee as a result of their brief drive succeeded in rolling up a membership of over 150,000 workers. They have been able to negotiate with leading subsidiaries of the United States Steel Corporation, and to confer with it officially on wage and working conditions, thus releasing the 45-year stranglehold which the United States Steel Corporation had on the Amalgamated Association.

On March 3, the United Shoe Workers of America with a nucleus of over 20,000 members started an organization campaign under C. I. O. auspices. On the following day an announcement was made of a prospective conference between the United Radio and Electrical Workers of America (a C. I. O. affiliate) and the General Electric Corporation which employs some 60,000 workers or one-fifth of the total number of workers manufacturing electrical products. The purpose of this conference was to discuss a basis for a collective bargaining program and specific demands presented by the union. Further negotiations were carried on with the Chrysler Automobile Company and plans were announced for intensive organization drives among the oil workers in the Texan oil fields and among the workers in the Southern textile industries. Moreover, craft locals in Northern New Jersey have recently announced plans for an organization campaign along industrial lines to meet with the approval of the C. I. O. The daily press presents story after story of revolt on the part of local craft unions from the official attitude of the A. F. of L. Obviously, unless the American Federation of Labor, despite its 2,000,000 members, sees the handwriting on the wall and cooperates with the C. I. O. in the organization of workers in mass production industries, it will seal its own doom.

### *New Techniques*

One of the techniques of organization which has been adopted by

the C. I. O. is the "stay-in" or "sit-down" strike. This new device in which workers remain within the plant but refuse to permit production to go on, has caught the imagination of workers in every industry and has once again released the time-honored militancy of American labor. Forcible eviction of workers from plants is a costly process which may cost lives as well as property. The sit-down strikes up to date have been free from excessive violence and have been of comparatively short duration. It has fostered the principle of trade union democracy for in the course of the strike the initiative and success of the strike depends upon the discipline and cooperation of the rank and file membership. Leadership may carry on negotiations—but the actual success of the strike depends upon self-discipline of the workers and the sympathy of the community.

There are certain dangers in this technique. There is the legalistic concept that the possession of a plant implies the confiscation of private property without due process of law. There is the danger that the sit-down strike, since it is so largely a rank and file device, may be instigated by an intransigent minority or even by "stool pigeons." The strike may be spontaneous and dependent upon the enthusiasm of workers within one plant in defiance of agreements made by the leadership of the unions.

The success of the sit-down strike depends in a large measure upon the type of political administration of the state, and this may stimulate labor toward independent political action. Both the conservatives who fear it and the progressives who praise it, realize that the occupation of a plant by workers must lead to a change in property concepts incompatible with our present legal foundations. Be that as it may, the sit-down has become an extremely practical and effective device in the unionization program of mass production industries.

What structural devices has the C. I. O. set up for protecting the interests of the skilled workers in the mass production industries? What devices have they created to keep the new recruit and educate him to become an active trade unionist? How will the C. I. O. meet the demands of craft workers formerly affiliated with the A. F. of L., now desirous of joining what amounts to a revival movement in trade unionism? It is perhaps too early to attempt to answer these pertinent questions. Industrial unionism is neither revolutionary per se nor a panacea for all of labor's ills. In the past, bureaucracy, personal

favoritism, and the suppressing of trade union democracy have been found in industrial organizations as well as in craft unions. The leaders of the C. I. O. and the A. F. of L. differ only as to the type of unionism which will afford a better instrument for securing control of the basic problems of wages, hours, and working conditions. Actually, the C. I. O. represents the pragmatic approach which Gompers himself accepted. The present movement is, therefore, to be seen not as a break in trade union history but rather as a continuation of a progressive labor attitude.

There have been rumors that the United Automobile Workers has been swamped with applications from workers of various crafts and industries not directly affiliated with the automobile industry. The transitional policy of the C. I. O. seems to be that of accepting these memberships until some form of organization can be created for them. Obviously, this trend smacks of the "one big union" idea of several decades back. The recent announcement that the textile drive will be carried on by a joint organizing committee of which the clothing workers' unions will be an important factor may also intensify the concept of the one big union idea.

The C. I. O. will adopt a pragmatic approach to these questions. In industries where skilled workers still constitute an important part of the labor supply they will follow the pattern of industrial unions like the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers. In industries where the skilled worker is a comparatively uncommon factor he will not be organized in any separate locals but in a local of skilled and unskilled workers with the trade agreement making special provisions for his particular skill. Up to the present time, the leadership of the C. I. O. has assumed responsibility for negotiating the trade agreements for the new unions in the industry, in cooperation, to be sure, with the leadership of those unions. What the future policies may be it is difficult to prophesy.

The movement for industrial unionism is a dynamic one. The C. I. O. has declared that the chief task of the American labor movement is that of organizing millions of semi-skilled and unskilled workers. It has infused American labor with the conviction that this can be accomplished provided the attempts are made with sufficient energy and foresight.

In the campaigns which are to follow many workers will receive

their first lessons in the class struggle. However limited its purpose and forms the trade union has been the traditional American instrument of that struggle. It may even become the basis of a political organization. As workers in various states come in contact with political and judiciary opposition, and as class conflicts grow sharper, there will be a recognition of the need for a genuine labor party. Properly directed, the present fight for industrial unionism may become the lever by which industrial democracy will be achieved in the United States.

## B I B L I O G R A P H Y

### CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> *American Labor Yearbook*, 1917-1918.

<sup>2</sup> "The Case for Industrial Unionism," *Industrial Unions Mean Unity* (pamphlet) page 9.

### CHAPTER II. THE ERA OF CRAFT UNIONISM

<sup>1</sup> Commons and Associates, *History of Labour in the United States*, Vol. I, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> F. A. Shannon, *The Homestead Act and the Labor Surplus*, in "The American Historical Review," July, 1936; cf. C. Goodrich and S. Davison, *The Wage-Earner in the Westward Movement*, in "The Political Science Quarterly," June, 1935, Mar., 1936; M. Kane, *Some Considerations of the Safety Valve Doctrine*, in the "Mississippi Valley Historical Review," Sept., 1936.

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<sup>4</sup> S. Perlman, *The History of Trade Unionism in the United States*, p. 79.

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<sup>6</sup> S. Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, Vol. I, p. 385; I. Tarbell, *The Nationalizing of Business, 1878-1898*, p. 167.

<sup>7</sup> L. Lorwin, *The American Federation of Labor*, p. 67.

<sup>8</sup> J. R. Commons, *Jurisdictional Disputes*, Wertheim Lectures on Industrial Relations, 1928, pp. 93-123.

<sup>9</sup> E. V. Debs, *Industrial Unionism*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> A. F. of L., *Proceedings*, 1899, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 1901, p. 87.

<sup>12</sup> S. Perlman and R. Taft, *History of Labour in the United States, 1896-1932*, Vol. IV, p. 362.

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<sup>14</sup> A. F. of L., *Proceedings*, 1912, p. 115.

<sup>15</sup> L. Corey, *The Decline of American Capitalism*, p. 557.

### CHAPTER III. PROGRESSIVE AND REVOLUTIONARY INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

<sup>1</sup> Wolman, L., *The Growth of American Trade Unions 1880-1923*, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. S. Hardman, *American Labor Dynamics*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Budish and Soule, *The New Unionism*, pp. 7, 10.

<sup>4</sup> L. Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, p. 65, Ch. XVIII. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America was treated as a secessionist body despite its outstanding success but was finally admitted into the Federation in 1933. (cf. J. Hardy, *The Clothing Workers*, Ch. V.)

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<sup>6</sup> See B. Wolfe, *Marx and America*, p. 25. Losovsky, *Marx and the Trade Unions*, Ch. VI.

<sup>7</sup> See G. A. Hoehn, *True Socialism*, in "American Federationist," Aug., 1898.

<sup>8</sup> N. I. Stone, *Attitude of Socialists Toward Trade Unions*, p. 3.

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<sup>11</sup> H. Kuhn, *Reminiscences of DeLeon*, p. 8.

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#### CHAPTER IV. ORGANIZING THE UNORGANIZED

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<sup>37</sup> See C.I.O., *How the Rubber Workers Won*, p. 3.

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<sup>45</sup> H. O'Connor, *Steel Dictator*, p. 185.

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<sup>52</sup> *N. Y. Times*, Oct. 17, 1934.

<sup>53</sup> "The Nation," March 27, 1935; "Daily Worker," March 22, 1935.

<sup>54</sup> C.I.O., *Case for Industrial Organization*, p. 18.

## CHAPTER V. THE ATLANTIC CITY CONVENTION OF THE A. F. OF L.

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<sup>2</sup> *N. Y. Times*, Oct. 2, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> A. F. of L., *Proceedings*, 1935, p. 521.

<sup>4</sup> R. M. Easley, *The N.C.F. and Its Labor Policy*, p. 17; *N.C.F., Its Methods and Its Aim*.

<sup>5</sup> M. Baron, *The A. F. of L. Shifts into First Gear*, "Modern Monthly," Dec., 1935.

<sup>6</sup> J. Schlossberg, *What Is Industrial Unionism?* "The Advance," Feb., 1936.

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<sup>9</sup> L. Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism*, Appendix, Table VII, pp. 224, 229.

<sup>10</sup> cf. *Types of Employer—Employee Hearings*, "Monthly Labor Review," Dec., 1935.

<sup>11</sup> A. F. of L., *Proceedings*, 1935, p. 563.

<sup>12</sup> cf. C.I.O., *Towards a Powerful A. F. of L.*

<sup>13</sup> J. Hochman, *High Tide at Atlantic City*, "The Nation," Nov. 6, 1935.

## CHAPTER VI. A DUAL ORGANIZATION?

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<sup>3</sup> L. Wolman, *Horizontal versus Vertical*, "Review of Reviews," April, 1936.

<sup>4</sup> A. Swaback, *The A. F. of L. at 'Frisco*, "New Internationalist," Nov., 1934; cf., M. Hallgreen, *False Leadership of American Labor*, "Modern Monthly," Aug., 1934.

<sup>5</sup> For text of the proposal, see C.I.O., "Union News Service," April 20, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> J. L. Lewis, *Industrial Democracy in Steel*.

<sup>1</sup> W. Green, *Organized Labor Protects All*, "Forum," April, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> W. Green, *The Majority Must Rule*, "Current History," Oct., 1936; A. F. of L., *Weekly News Service*, Sept. 12, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> For detailed account of the legal issues involved, see *C.I.O. Controversy*, "International Juridical Association, Monthly Bulletin," August, 1936.

<sup>10</sup> L. Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism*, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Text of Zaritsky's Peace Proposal in "The New Leader," Oct. 26, 1936.

<sup>12</sup> C.I.O., *Union News Service*, Oct. 26, 1936.

<sup>13</sup> See *The Great Labor Upheaval*, "Fortune," Oct., 1936.

<sup>14</sup> R. M. Stein, *Steel Drive Moves On*, "Socialist Call," Jan. 16, 1937.

<sup>15</sup> S.W.O.C., *Steel Labor*, Dec. 5, 1936.

<sup>16</sup> A. F. of L., *Proceedings*, 1936, (unbound edition), p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> The highlights of the convention from Nov. 16 to Nov. 27 were ably reported in the *N. Y. Times* (Stark), *N. Y. Evening Post* (Levinson), and *Daily Worker* (Budenz). *Justice* (Dec. 1, 15) and the A. F. of L. *Weekly News Service* (Dec. 1936, Jan. 2, 9, 1937) should also be consulted. The most interesting observations were made in the radical journals: cf., *Socialist Call*, Dec. 5; J. Lovestone, in *Workers Age*, Dec. 5, 12; J. Stachel, "The 56th Annual Convention of the A. F. of L.", *The Communist*, Jan., 1937; W. Z. Foster, "The Convention of the A. F. of L.", *The Communist International*, Jan., 1937; S. Baron, "Blind Alley in Tampa," *American Socialist Monthly*, Dec., 1936.

<sup>18</sup> *The Advance*, Dec., 1936.

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<sup>20</sup> cf., *The New Leader*, Dec. 5, 1936.

<sup>21</sup> c.f. *The Twilight of the A. F. of L.*, "The New Republic," Dec. 16, 1936.

<sup>22</sup> *N. Y. Evening Post*, Nov. 24, 1936.